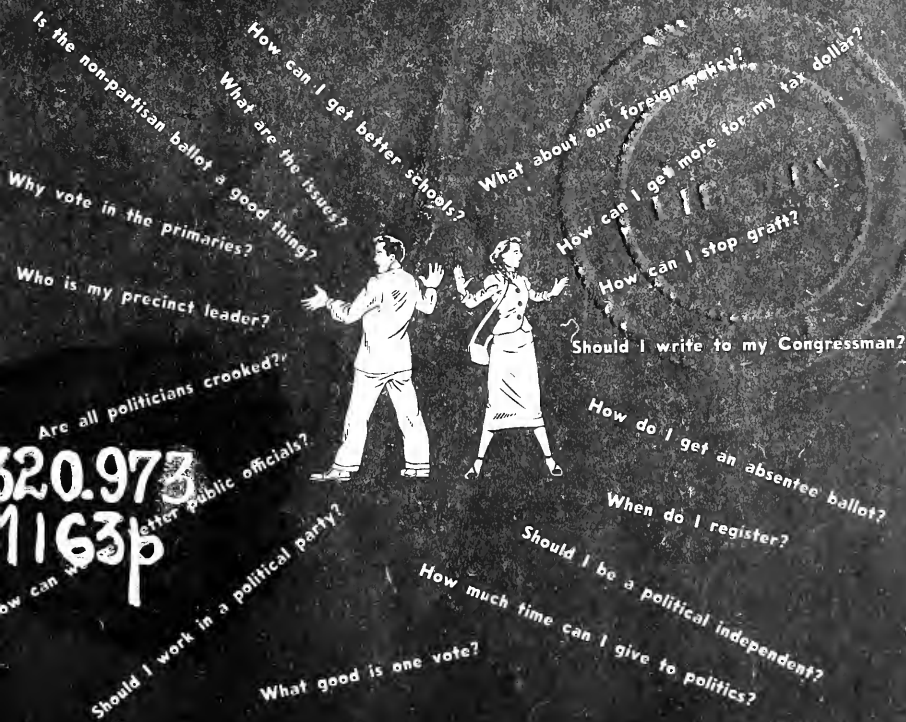


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PUBLIC AFFAIRS PAMPHLET No. 181

# POLITICS IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT

BY JOSEPH E. McLEAN



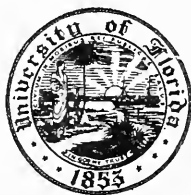
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*Thomas H. D. Drapery*

President,  
American Heritage Foundation

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—Ladies' Home Journal

DO you think politics is a dirty word? And that politicians are shady characters?

If so, you condemn yourself—for you, too, are a politician, and a pretty weak one if you think you are above politics. The citizen who abstains from politics is not a non-politician. He is merely an ineffective politician who unwittingly serves as an ally of the worst machine bosses, ward heelers, and peddlers of influence.

Professionally, Joseph E. McLean is an Associate Professor of Politics in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. As a citizen, he plays an active role on the National Planning Committee of the American Veterans Committee, a non-partisan veterans' organization that seeks to improve civic responsibility.

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*First Edition, April, 1952*

## POLITI

These are ACTION years — *individual* action years — when millions of Americans must express their sense of rightness through the vigor of their vote, if we are to keep America strong. Today's America has little space for the dead weight of indifferent citizenship. The indifferent citizen is a *spectator* citizen. He is anybody's citizen. The ACTION citizen is a participant. He belongs to himself. He directs his force toward the greatest good for the greatest number. He knows that the quality of national politics can be no more intelligent nor more ethical than the quality of local citizenship in which national politics has its roots.

Important as it is to register and vote, the participating citizen must do more. There is work to be done in his local community and precinct where he can make his influence felt. It is not an easy job, and he must be prepared to stand rebuffs. But, unless he is willing to take these set-backs in stride and really work for what he believes in, he has no right to complain over the deficiencies of elected government officials.

That is why this brief but absorbing booklet is so timely. Whoever acquaints himself with the data in it should be able to discuss intelligently the basic, political problems of this critical year. But the value of this booklet does not end with an election year, for the information herein is designed to stimulate more active, more effective citizenship for years to come. It is a practical approach to personal participation in politics. It encourages the will to DO and implements a way of DOING for every good citizen.

Thomas A. Brady

President,  
American Heritage Foundation

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Politics has been defined as "the study of influence and the influential." You can be influential—for good or bad—but you can't avoid having influence. If you register, if you vote in primary and general elections, if you properly "pressure" your elected representatives, if you are an all-year-round citizen—your action will serve to strengthen the responsible party leaders and to weaken the party bosses. The result may be government policies and practices that help you, your family, and your friends.

### The Case of William Q. Smith

William Q. Smith did not understand this. Bill had such a low opinion of politicians that he never troubled to register or vote, much less take part in the campaigns. And because a lot of people felt and acted like he did, his city was badly run. Many of the streets had gaping holes in the pavement, and most of them needed repaving. The city never seemed to manage both garbage collection and snow removal during the winter months. The public schools were so overcrowded, inadequately staffed, and poorly run that the Smiths felt that they had to send their children to private schools at considerable extra expense. Even the police department was behind the times and inadequate, as Bill could testify from personal experience. Recently a neighbor of his who had come home late at night had been held up and robbed within two blocks of his home, and the police had never succeeded in catching the holdup man. Yet for all of its poor services, Bill's city had one of the highest tax rates in the country. Bill also complained about such national issues as taxes and the inadequacy of social security and unemployment benefits. Yet he never thought of doing anything about them.



All of this does not mean that Bill Smith was a bad person simply because he didn't vote. Nor does it mean that getting a lot of people to vote is the complete answer to our public problems. The fact remains, however, that Bill was an armchair citizen and, as such, he mortgaged the right to criticize the conditions that resulted from his inaction.

In Communist Russia there is only one political party—whose membership is restricted to a very small minority of the adult

population. In democratic U.S.A. we could eventually approach the totalitarian system if millions of Americans were to dodge their political responsibilities and turn political power over to a handful of irresponsible professional politicians.

The average Russian cannot openly criticize the administration of his schools, the tax system, or most other governmental matters. Here, we have the right to criticize any and all government policies, but many fail to exercise the privileges and obligations of citizenship. Here, we run the risk of surrendering our liberties by default.

As an American citizen, are you or should you be concerned with the traffic problem, the cost of living, the education of your children, the efficiency of our defense effort, graft and corruption, taxes, labor-management problems, the collection of your garbage, our foreign policies? Are you concerned about the caliber of the candidates nominated by your political party or by both major parties, about the responsiveness of your party leadership to the membership, about dozens of other questions?



Are you "in there fighting" for what you think is right? Is the primary election a "state secret" as far as you are concerned? Is the party organization a complete mystery to you? Is the organization of government—federal, state, and local—a riddle designed only for the experts? Would information on both party and government organization and practices increase the chances of your becoming an effective politician and a better citizen?

If your answer to any of these questions is "yes," then this pamphlet is for you!

## Poor Government Starts at Home

Poor government (and "poor," more often than not, means incompetent rather than corrupt) begins at home, right at the grass-roots level. When you read about a scandal involving a federal official, you may generally be sure that the official in question was "sponsored" by a local party organization. If you think the actions of a United States Senator or Congressman are not in the public interest, you should look to the county or municipal party organization which gave him his start in politics. If you disapprove of your governor, look to the local roots of his political influence. And, of course, if your local school board or city government seems inefficient or unresponsive to your community needs, the direct influence of the local political organization or lack thereof should be clear.

No matter where we find corruption or waste or plain incompetence in government—whether federal, state, or local—we must look down to the grass-roots of politics. And hidden behind all of these cases is the individual citizen-politician—*you*.



There are 1,000,000 elective offices in the states and local communities as compared with 533 for the nation. Indeed, of the 533, only two (President and Vice-President) are truly national officials. Important to note is the "local character" of the 531 federal elections. Senators and Congressmen depend upon local and state political organizations, not upon national political parties. Furthermore, the presidential and vice-presidential candidates are nominated by party conventions controlled by com-



binations of state and local party organizations. All of this, of course, merely emphasizes the importance of local politics—which determines the character of the local political organizations and, hence, that of the national political organizations.

### Layer-Cake Government

Most of us think of our federal system as having three layers of government—federal, state, and local—with each level assigned definite functions and responsibilities. And many of us believe that a specific service or function generally belongs exclusively to *one* layer of government. Thus, for example, at first glance it may seem that the police force is purely of local concern, that the network of main highways is a state responsibility, and that military defense is a federal job.

Most of us fail to realize that this layer-cake is much more like a marble cake. There are many combined activities—administrative, financial, and political—which blend throughout the cake and ignore the layers.

Almost every public problem you can mention today involves all of the so-called “layers” of government. For instance, local police may be trained by state police, and both, in turn, by the F.B.I. Public housing in a mid-western city may be directly under a city housing authority which was set up under a law passed at the state capital, and may receive financial aid from a federal office in Washington. A federal agency (OPS) attempting to stabilize prices may be aided by a city ordinance that makes black markets a violation of city law as well as of federal law; thus, both the federal investigators and local police join hands in attempting to keep prices down.

### Party Organization

Similarly, the political party organization operates through all the layers from the bottom upward. The man elected “purely” on his merits for a local office (or for local membership on the party committee) may then become an important factor in the selection of state and federal officials. If your local man is held responsible by a reasonably large group of people, it is safe to say that he will tend to support candidates who are competent and deserving of widespread support. On the other hand, if he

is responsible to a small minority of party hacks, he will probably support other party hacks for important public positions. Thus, the responsibility for poor appointments does not rest solely with the local party leader. A good deal of the blame must rest with the many citizens who have abdicated their responsibilities by refusing to "pressure" their party leaders and elected representatives during the many months that lie between elections.

In this mid-twentieth-century style of government, the citizen-politician must develop the know-how of dealing with problems that cut across federal, state, and local jurisdictional lines. The tools that offer him the greatest leverage in tackling these problems are the political party and the political process, for these operate from the bottom and affect all layers. If you want to exercise influence on national affairs you will find it necessary to participate in state or local politics on a year-round basis. Federal, state, and local affairs are inextricably interwoven.



## THE CITIZEN-POLITICIAN FACES HIS PROBLEMS

IT is easy for the individual citizen to get discouraged as he views the problems at any layer of our government. Even though he has been a conscientious voter, even though he has tried to keep abreast of civic affairs, he may be disturbed by the picture of political corruption or incompetence. He may also be discouraged by the sheer complexity of the structure of government and by the mechanics of the political process. But instead of excusing his own political inactivity on the ground that all politics is "corrupt," a citizen should keep the following things in mind.



### Keep In Mind

1. Most professional politicians are inherently decent people. Many would like to do a better job and would do so if the general public showed a more positive interest in government and gave them year-round support.

2. The vast majority of civil servants are honest and are trying to give the taxpayer a full return on his tax dollars.

3. Politics will improve as the moral tone of our whole society improves. We should not ignore the man who places temptation in the path of a politician. The person who buys political favor is just as guilty as the one who provides it.



4. Something can be done. One answer to bad politics is not less but more politics—good politics, in which the citizen-politician plays an effective role. An even stronger answer is to raise the general level of morals in business, in labor, and in farm and other groups in society.

As a first step toward playing an effective role, the citizen-politician must understand that one person—himself—can be of crucial importance in the political process. The obvious kind of proof lies in those elections the results of which turned on one vote or on a small proportion of the votes cast. There are many examples. In the famous disputed presidential election of 1876, President Hayes was elected by one vote in the electoral college,

which vote in turn was supported by a one-vote margin in a special fifteen-man commission. The man who cast the second decisive vote had been elected to Congress by a margin of one vote. And that vote was cast by a sick man who asked that he be transported to the polls in order to cast his ballot!



Less than one vote per precinct in the state of California in 1916 lost the Presidency for Charles Evans Hughes. Thirty-two years later, California was lost to Thomas E. Dewey by a margin of close to one vote per precinct. In 1950 Congressman W. Kingsland Macy lost by a margin of 138 votes out of 155,000 votes cast—or one vote in every third precinct.

More such dramatic examples could be offered. Even more important, however, are those cases—most of them unknown or undocumented—where one individual started the chain reaction leading to the establishment of a new public policy. During World War II a major fiscal reform—the pay-as-you-go personal income tax plan—became a reality through the efforts of a one-man pressure group—Beardsley Ruml. In 1949 the successful drive to unseat the boss-controlled mayor of Grand Rapids, Michigan, was led by a beautiful grandmother. Currently in a New Jersey community, an effort to obtain better public library service is being sparked by a housewife who is using the telephone, a station wagon, and her neighbors in a “pressure” drive on the governing body of her community.

It's a fact—one individual can be very important.

Once the citizen-politician has accepted the idea that he can be influential, he should then develop his personal radar equipment to cut through the fog that surrounds the political process.

A few facts are basic:

1. A party or any other political organization needs money and workers; how it gets them is very important.

2. The grass-roots unit of the political organization is generally the precinct or election district. This usually has from 300 to 1,000 voters. The total number of precincts in the nation is about 150,000.

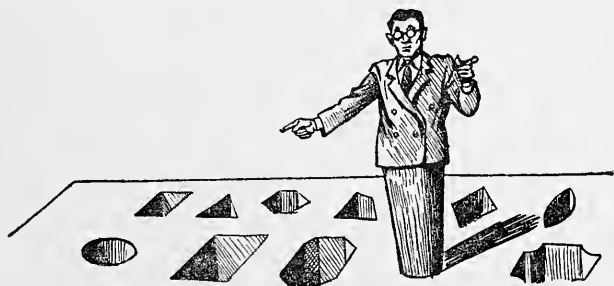
3. The number of party workers at the precinct level may approach one million in a hotly contested national election.

4. The precinct committeeman or committeewoman is a very influential person. Do you know your Republican and Democratic precinct leaders?

5. Committee members generally are elected at the primary elections. Do you know when your primary election is held?

6. The party officials choose the candidates, influence the party program, and in general may influence public policy at all levels of government. There are also informal influences. The political clubs, for example, are important parts of the machinery of politics.

7. The political process is not the exclusive property of the two major parties—Democratic and Republican. An individual may exercise political power in minor parties or in non-partisan civic organizations (such as the very successful Cincinnati City Charter Committee or the League of Women Voters), or he may be effective in special-purpose pressure groups. He should remember that not all pressure groups are bad; many provide valuable information to legislators and to the public; others are



concerned with a single service of interest to the general public—for example, the Parent-Teachers Association, which is concerned with the proper development of our public schools.

## ELECTIONS

AS a first step toward increasing his influence, the citizen should learn how elections are conducted. Your state has by law fixed certain policies on registration; on absentee voting; on the conduct of primary and general elections; on age, residence, and other requirements of a qualified voter. A citizen can easily obtain the basic information from his municipal or county clerk.



### Age Requirements

First, are you twenty-one years of age? This is a requirement in every state except Georgia which has lowered the age barrier to eighteen.

### Residence Requirements

How long have you resided in your state? The state laws generally require residence of six months or a year, although Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Rhode Island require two years. In addition, a shorter period of residence is required in your election district and sometimes in your county.

A relatively small number of people who qualify as to age and residence are barred from voting by state laws covering such

groups as paupers, idiots, the insane, inmates of penal institutions, and those convicted of various types of crime. Residents of the District of Columbia have no vote.

## Literacy and Poll Tax Requirements

A third of the states now require some evidence of literacy. Some of these laws are fairly administered. In other instances, however, the literacy test is deliberately used to discriminate against would-be voters. They may be asked, for example, to recite the state constitution or to interpret a highly technical provision on which the most learned of jurists fail to agree.

Payment of a poll-tax or head-tax is still a qualification for voting in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia. There are various estimates of the numbers of white and Negro citizens—perhaps 10 million—who are disqualified for failing to pay the tax.

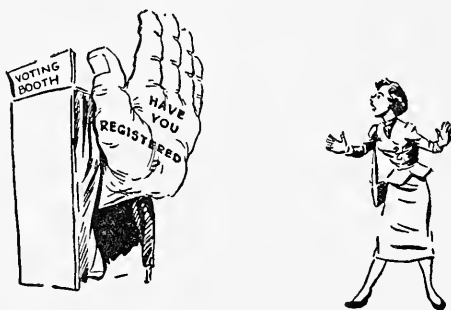
## Registration

A final and almost universal requirement for voting is registration—which means having your name recorded on the official register or voting list of your polling place. In a simpler day and in a rural or small-town society, registration was unnecessary. In densely populated cities, however, the election officials don't know all of the would-be voters. Some system of registration is necessary to prevent some people from voting several times or using the names of dead persons. When Philadelphia adopted a system of personal registration in 1900, the total number of voters in the city dropped from 385,000 to 251,000. In one particularly corrupt ward, the number of registered voters was reduced by 58 per cent.

Present registration laws in some states, however, still leave much to be desired. Many states have a personal periodic registration system under which the prospective voter has to appear in person to register—usually on one of several specified days before election day at periodic intervals ranging from one to ten years. The disadvantages of the system are obvious: sickness, business trips, or a poor memory may disfranchise a citizen. Several million citizens lose their vote in each election because of inability to register. And many frauds are still possible.

A number of states have a system of permanent personal registration. This system requires the voter to register at a central office at any time during the year. So long as he continues to live in the same election district and votes regularly the voter need not re-register. The permanent list of registered voters is kept current by a staff in a central office.

Regardless of the system used in your state, it is vitally important that you register. In only a few places is it possible for an unregistered citizen to vote should he suddenly get the balloting urge. "Get-out-the-vote" campaigns frequently suffer if they



have not been preceded by "get registered" drives at the appropriate time of the year. Several years ago a shrewd political commentator declared: "Nothing you are likely to do in politics is more important than this business of registering." He might have added—"except voting." Registering is important but only as a preparation for voting.

### Primaries

An essential part of voting is participation in the primary elections. Otherwise the general elections may resemble a World Series in which neither team happens to be a favorite of yours. The well-known political writer, Frank R. Kent, has pointed up the significance of the primaries: "Primaries are the exclusive gate through which all the parties must pass. Control of that gate in any community means control of the political situation in that community. . . . It ought to be plain then that, so long as the machine controls the primaries, it is in a position to limit



the choice of the voters in the general election to its choice in the primaries. That is the real secret of its power and, so long as it holds that power, it cannot be put out of business."

If you want to help clean up politics, you should not only make a point of voting in the primary but, if possible, of participating in the pre-primary campaigns. Remember that in the primary elections the party's candidates for public office are not the only ones chosen; in the same primaries the precinct leaders or party committeemen may be selected. Your participation in the primary may have a direct impact on the entire party organization—from the precinct leader at the bottom running up through ward, county, and state committees to the national committee at the top.

Since the primary laws differ in the various states, we cannot tell you how they operate in your community. You can find out by visiting your municipal or county clerk or a party official and asking about the election laws in your state. You might ask, for example:

How does a candidate get his name on the ballot for the primary elections? How many signatures are required on a petition to have a name placed on the ballot? How much time is permitted to get them? What are the provisions that govern "write-in" campaigns?

Is the primary open or closed? (If open, the voter may vote in either party primary and is not required to register his party affiliation.)

Are any nominations in your state still made by party convention? If so, how are your delegates chosen? Does your state have a presidential preference primary?

What provisions govern absentee voting?

What are the laws governing the conduct and financing of campaigns, election frauds, poll watching, and so forth?

And if you don't already know, what precinct or election district do you live in? What are the boundaries of your precinct? How many voters are registered? How many voted in the last primary and in the last general election?

As you receive answers to your questions you will realize that many citizens have been unduly frightened by the supposed complexity of the election process. Despite unnecessarily burdensome

restrictions and qualifications, it is not difficult to learn enough about the election laws to register and vote.

### **Most Important: Vote on Election Day**

Registration, participation in the primaries, and active pre-election work are all important. But your main job as a voter is, and always will be, the casting of a ballot on election day. In every election there are millions of registered voters who neglect this final but vital step. Some may be sick and unable to go to the polls; others may be away; in many states the voting laws are unnecessarily restrictive; but the majority of registered voters who fail to cast their ballot do so out of sheer negligence. They are the kind of citizens who let the bosses decide what kind of government we shall have.

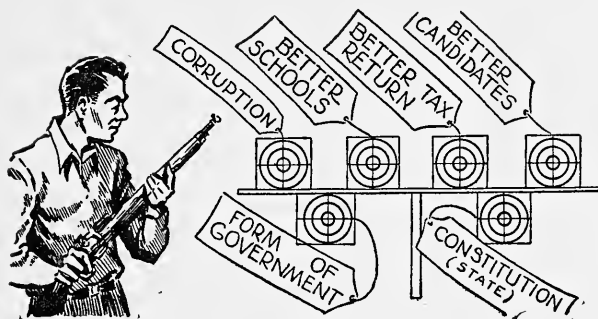
A reminder is in order also to those who have to be away from home on election day, or who have recently moved but are duly registered in their last place of residence. Many states permit the casting of absentee ballots, but it is usually necessary to take steps to obtain such a ballot well in advance of the election. If there is a chance of your being away at the next election, you should find out now about the rules in your state. If your state does not permit absentee voting, you might talk with your representative in the state legislature about changing the law.

How you vote is your own business. You may want to support all of the candidates of the party you believe most closely represents your interests. Or you can split your vote, choosing the best man for each office. Much will depend on your immediate and long-range political objectives.

## **YOUR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES**

AS you acquire information on the election process and prepare to cast your vote, you may be looking toward one or more political objectives that you would like to attain in your community, in your state, or in the nation.

What do you want to do with your political influence? Get better schools? Get a better return on your tax dollar? See that better men are put in office? Improve the form of your city government? Amend your state constitution?



No matter what your political objective is, it is safe to say that in many other parts of the United States individual citizens have worked or are working for similar goals. Much can be learned from their experiences. And you will be encouraged by the success of many movements that originated with one citizen or with a small group of earnest citizens.

Information on programs of political reform, such as the Model City Charter and the Model Direct Primary, can be obtained from the National Municipal League; data on progress of citizen activity for the schools from the National Citizens' Commission for the Public Schools; and technical publications for problems of municipal departments from the Public Administration Service, Chicago. A citizen, or group of citizens, can get plenty of technical assistance; they should never permit local political bosses (where they exist) to kill off their efforts by ridiculing the amateurs.

Take the case of a city throttled by a corrupt machine. At the turn of the century, Cincinnati was dominated by a saloon-keeper, George B. Cox, who owned much of the real estate, who ran banks and stores, who could make or break judges. On his death in 1915, his power was passed on to relatives and his saloon remained the center of a gambling ring and the real seat of power in the city. Not until 1923 did the citizens become sufficiently aroused to take corrective action. A young lawyer, Murray Seasongood, and Henry Bentley furnished much of the leadership and, with others, established a City Charter Committee. This group succeeded in winning a new charter that pro-

vided for a council-manager plan of government. The charter committee is still active as a non-partisan citizens' group and is very much alive after a quarter-century of vigorous activity. And Cincinnati has good government.

Portland, Oregon, offers additional evidence. Mrs. Dorothy M. Lee was elected mayor in May, 1948. Three years after she took the oath of office, she had cleaned up the city, sent the slot machines to the dump heap, closed the brothels, scattered the dice games, and created what is accepted as a truly honest police force. She saw that the city budget was balanced and that the downtown traffic problem was solved. Significantly, Mrs. Lee had started her political career in the *precincts*, back in the 1920's. She worked *inside*—not outside—the political system.

On a smaller but very vital scale, another woman demonstrated what one citizen can do. Margaret Hickey, writing in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, reported: "When Mrs. E. A. Randall, of Brownsville, Texas, found that the city's garbage ordinance was not being enforced even in the face of a threatened polio epidemic, she became a 'political pilgrim.' She got the League of Women Voters to organize the 'Alley Annies,' who patrolled the town,



noted violations, checked police records and court blotters. Results: citizens' groups were formed, metal garbage containers appeared, the number of disposal trucks doubled. Now there's strict enforcement."

This case illustrates the importance of the "pressure group" activity which is needed to complement the "voting" activity of the good citizen.

# 1952 Voting Information — State by State

	Registration By Mail Permitted	Absentee Voting Permitted in Primary	Absentee Voting Permitted in General Election	Elected Governor in 1952	Elected Senator in 1952	Number of Representatives To Be Elected	Date of Primary	Run-off	Presidential Primary
Alabama <sup>1</sup> .....	No	No	No	No	No	9	May 6	June 3	
Arizona.....	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	2	Sept. 9		
Arkansas <sup>1</sup> .....	No <sup>2</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	6	July 29	Aug. 12	
California.....	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	30	June 3		June 3
Colorado.....	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	4	Sept. 9		
Connecticut.....	No	Party Convention	Yes	No	Yes	6	Party Convention		
Delaware.....	No	Party Convention	Yes	Yes	Yes	1	Party Convention		
Florida.....	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	8	May 6	May 27	May 6
Georgia.....	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	10	*		
Idaho.....	No <sup>3</sup>	Yes	Yes	No	No	2	Aug. 12		
Illinois.....	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	25	April 8		April 8
Indiana.....	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	11	May 6		
Iowa.....	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	8	June 2		
Kansas.....	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	6	Aug. 5		
Kentucky.....	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	8	Aug. 2		
Louisiana.....	No	No	No	Yes	No	8	July 29 <sup>4</sup>	Aug. 26	
Maine <sup>5</sup> .....	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	3	June 16		
Maryland.....	No	No	No	No	Yes	7	May 5		May 5
Massachusetts.....	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	14	Sept. 16		April 29
Michigan.....	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	18	Sept. 9		
Minnesota.....	Yes	Yes <sup>7</sup>	Yes <sup>7</sup>	Yes	Yes	9	Sept. 9		Mar. 18
Mississippi <sup>1</sup> .....	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	6	Aug. 26	Sept. 16	
Missouri.....	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	11	Aug. 5		
Montana.....	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	2	July 15		
Nebraska.....	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4	April 1		April 1
Nevada.....	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	1	Sept. 2		
New Hampshire.....	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	2	Sept. 9		Mar. 11
New Jersey.....	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	14	April 15		April 15
New Mexico.....	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	2	May 6		
New York.....	No	No	Yes <sup>8</sup>	No	Yes	43	*		
North Carolina.....	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	12	May 31	June 28	
North Dakota.....	No <sup>2</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	2	June 24		
Ohio.....	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	23	May 6		May 6
Oklahoma.....	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	6	July 1	July 22	May 16
Oregon.....	No <sup>4</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	4	May 16		
Pennsylvania.....	No	No	No	No	Yes	30	April 22		April 22
Rhode Island.....	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2	*		
South Carolina.....	No	No	No	No	No	6	July 8	July 22	
South Dakota.....	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	2	June 3		June 3
Tennessee.....	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	9	Aug. 7		
Texas <sup>1</sup> .....	No <sup>2</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	22	July 26	Aug. 23	
Utah.....	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	2	Sept. 9		
Vermont.....	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1	Sept. 9		
Virginia <sup>1</sup> .....	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	10	Aug. 5		
Washington.....	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	7	Sept. 9		
West Virginia.....	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	6	May 13		May 13
Wisconsin.....	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	10	Sept. 9		April 1
Wyoming.....	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	1	Aug. 19		

<sup>1</sup> Poll Tax receipt requisite for voting. (In Alabama veterans are exempt.)

<sup>2</sup> No registration required.

<sup>3</sup> Federal employees can register by mail.

<sup>4</sup> Federal employees and spouses can register by mail.

<sup>5</sup> In Maine, election of Governor, Senator and Representatives on Sept. 8. Only President and Vice-President to be voted for on Nov. 4.

<sup>6</sup> In Louisiana, primary for election of Governor on Jan. 15; for Senator and Representatives on July 29.

<sup>7</sup> Minnesota permits no voting outside continental U. S. except by employees of the Army and Navy.

<sup>8</sup> In New York, only federal employees, teachers, students, actors, railroad employees, commercial travelers, veterans in hospitals, and the immediate families (spouse, children and parents) may request ballot by mail.

\* Legislature had not yet set date of primary when this pamphlet went to press.

To attain your goal you may need to take part in the election process or you may have to "pressure" your public officials. Or you may need to do both. In any event, you may initiate action as an individual, whose example then attracts the support of an increasing number of fellow citizens. The result is organized action—politics—to achieve a goal.

## GETTING DOWN TO WORK

IN tackling your civic problem or problems, you, as a citizen-politician, will inevitably face certain basic personal issues:

How much time can you devote to politics?

Do you want to be active in a political party? If so, which one?

Do you prefer to work as an independent?

Do you prefer to give priority to pressure group activity?

Are you willing to run for public office? Party office?

Are you prepared to work for good, qualified candidates?

There are certain things every individual can do: register to vote, try to know the candidates, participate in the primaries and in the general elections, try to persuade your family and friends to vote.

The last-named item may be expanded to include organized activity such as the important "get-out-the-vote" campaigns sponsored by various civic organizations.

Your other political activities will depend on your answers to such questions as those raised above.

*Do you prefer to be an independent or to work in a party organization?* Probably the vast majority of citizens should belong to a party. Your personal decision, however, may be guided by several factors: your temperament, the nature of the major and minor parties in your community, and the particular objectives you have in mind. Political parties seek to gain control of government through the appeal of candidates and programs. Should you feel that the parties' candidates and programs offer basically no differences, you may wish to swell the ranks of the independents and hope that the two major parties will compete for your favor. This may help achieve some distinctions in the party programs.

In addition to finding little difference in the programs of the parties, you may face a situation in your community where the party machines are not only corrupt but are allied with each other. Then, if you are primarily interested in local problems, you may favor the independent role (as in the case of the non-partisan citizens' group in Cincinnati).

Or you may be interested primarily in a single problem—for example, constitutional reform—and wish to gain support of Democrats, Republicans and independents on a non-partisan basis. A possible disadvantage here, of course, is that in promoting a single cause—however worthy—you may be greatly limiting your effectiveness in the promotion of other worthy endeavors.

It should be noted, also, that it is sometimes possible to combine party action with a considerable degree of independence. Party workers need not be slavish adherents to a party line—especially if the line is laid down by a corrupt or irresponsible leadership. Independent-minded members of a party may force the leadership of the party to assume a position more in keeping with the general public interest.

There should be a healthy competition not only between the parties themselves but also between the parties and the independent-thinking voter. If the voter builds up a resistance to the superficial appeals of the competing parties, then the party organizations should increasingly move toward a sharper definition of policies and a more honest exposition of their proposals.

In many parts of the country, candidates find it increasingly difficult to offer the moon to the unsuspecting voters. For example, in the 1950 congressional election in a New Jersey district, one candidate promised a greater rearmament effort, federal aid for education, an expansion of social security, *plus* a balanced



budget and decreased taxes. His opponent stated quite frankly that he favored virtually the same program except that he did not see how we could finance it without increased taxation—unfortunate as that might be. The latter won the election—and in a district traditionally safe for the party of his opponent!

*If you prefer to work in a party, which party should you choose?* Again, certain imponderables are present. You may, for example, favor the national program of one party but find that that party in your state and community is a corrupt organization. Many New Jersey Democrats during the heyday of Boss Hague's power felt it was futile to work in the party or even to vote in the primaries. For years, also, many good Republicans in Philadelphia were ashamed of and apathetic toward their local Republican machine. One answer, of course, is to organize other party members who agree with you and work *within* the party toward eliminating incompetent leadership. Another answer is to work temporarily with the opposition party if good candidates are being presented in opposition to those hand picked by your own party bosses.

A different dilemma is presented if you live in a one-party community or a one-party state. The traditional dominance of one party is not confined to the South. You may live in a city, county, or even a state outside the South that seems to vote a one-way ticket in every election. Should you favor the "permanent" minority party, your position is a difficult one. Certain compensations, however, are available. By working in the minority party you are helping build a real two-party system, and an organization that would be available to take over the government of your community should the voters rebel against the dominant group. Also, it is simpler for you to build your personal influence within the minority party to the extent that you may serve on the state committee or as a delegate to the national party convention; there you may have a greater influence should your local minority party be part of a *national* majority.

As in the case of your decision on being an independent, your choice of a party will depend on what you think of the parties' current and potential programs. It will also depend on whether you have local or state or national goals in mind.



*Another related question is: Do you wish to confine your efforts to pressure group activity?* You may feel strongly about a single issue such as better schools, improved roads, or a new constitution. Pressure groups can serve a worthwhile purpose by focusing the public's attention on some glaring fault or need in our society. The single-purpose pressure group can do harm if its members lose perspective, develop a one-track mind, and ignore the general public interest. For example, if you go all-out for better roads you may weaken other vital services such as schools and health. The essential warning is: Keep your perspective and a sense of balance. Watch your facts and figures.

*Many of your answers will depend upon the amount of time that you can devote to organizational work.* It is necessary to plan your time. It may be necessary to delegate some of your responsibilities. In some families a division of labor has proved



satisfactory. For example, the wife has concentrated on local affairs; the husband, on national matters. Organized baby-sitting may help young parents.

If you are a member of a pressure group or of a political party, keep in mind the values of specialization and division of labor. Don't try to do all the research on every problem yourself. Don't try to master every detail on every issue. Learn to trust your colleagues who were assigned to cover certain areas of investigation or research. Don't quibble. Maintain respect for the opposite point of view. Debate and discussion are healthy elements

in any organization, but endless debate and endless discussion may be a waste of everyone's time and are the equivalent of inaction. With proper conservation of your time, you can meet your responsibilities as a producer, as a family member, and as an effective citizen.

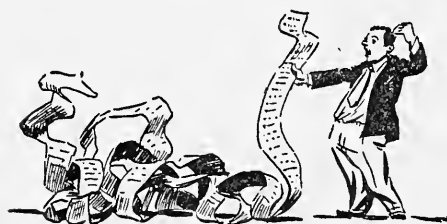
## THE YEAR-ROUND CITIZEN

THE effective politician will do more than worry about primary and election campaigns. There is a year-round job to be done.

### Making Citizenship More Effective

Many long-range reforms require continuing activity if they are to be achieved and kept on an effective basis. Some of those which deserve your study and consideration as a citizen follow.

*Improvement of registration and voting laws.* Since our society is characterized by a high degree of mobility, many conscientious citizens are deprived of their right to vote either because they are temporarily absent from their home communities or because they have so recently moved their residence that they cannot meet the residence requirements. Sometimes absentee voting laws are so poorly constructed or administered that the absentee voter may receive his ballot after the closing date for its return. Literacy tests and poll-tax requirements may disfranchise millions of citizens who might otherwise vote. Hence, you should consider the desirability of achieving the elimination of too rigid or unfair registration and voting requirements.



*The short-ballot movement.* In many communities the voter is called upon to choose

candidates for a long list of offices. Many of these officials—dog-catcher, clerk of courts, coroner, and the like—might well be appointive officials. The voter is too busy to know all of the candidates and too busy to pass on their respective merits

for a particular job. If we narrow the list of officers to the few responsible policy-determining officials—for example, the mayor and council in your city and the governor and legislators in your state—we simplify and improve the structure of government and at the same time improve the effectiveness of the citizen. Remarkable strides have been made through the leadership of such men as Richard S. Childs and through the former Short Ballot Organization and the National Municipal League. Much remains to be accomplished.

*Other reforms may also merit your study.* You may wish to examine the non-partisan ballot idea and decide whether it would be adaptable in your community. Many observers argue that there is no Democratic or Republican way of cleaning the streets; hence municipal affairs should be run on a non-partisan



basis. And it is a fact that more than half of our cities have non-partisan elections. Others, however, insist that there are basic differences in viewpoint on local issues that are related to similar differences on national issues. Further, they argue, non-partisanship at the local level would destroy the roots of our major parties and hence the two-party system itself. It is not the purpose of this pamphlet to provide a final answer. It is your responsibility to examine the merits of the short ballot, the non-partisan ballot, proportional representation, and other devices that have been suggested and tried in an effort to simplify the tasks of the citizen. We need more than the experts at work on these issues. We need an informed and active citizenry.

*Simplification of government structure.* Do you live in the outskirts of a metropolitan area where the economic and social

unity is broken down by a number of independent suburban governments? Do you feel that your community should cooperate more closely with its neighboring communities? Should it consolidate with one or more of its neighbors? Certainly, some of our major problems—traffic, health, schools, taxation—cannot be solved by any one community acting on its own. Germs, for ex-



ample, do not recognize the city boundary lines, especially where the citizens of Weedunk live on the north side of Main Avenue and the citizens of Youdunk live on the south side.

The forms of government are also important. Some observers today favor the council-manager or the strong mayor plan for our municipalities. In our newer state constitutions, the principle of a concentration of administrative authority balanced with executive responsibility is also recognized.



In your state, do you have a governor who is allegedly responsible for the state administration but whose hands are tied by so many constitutional arrangements that he is not a free agent? New Jersey is one of the states that recently succeeded in obtaining a new constitution that greatly improved an outmoded governmental structure. A new charter was approved by the voters in 1947, replacing a constitution that had been drafted in 1844. The new con-

stitution was the result of citizen action led over a period of years by a Democratic governor and two succeeding Republican gov-

ernors. Much of the opposition had come from the machine boss of Jersey City. Yet the people who were year-round citizens ultimately won their fight.

### "Pressuring" for Better Government

Either individually or as a member of one or more groups, the year-round citizen watches and talks with his elected representatives. He writes his Congressman when things are wrong; he also writes his Congressman when he does the right thing. A Congressman trying to fulfill his obligations is often caught in a daily crossfire from organized interest groups. He would appreciate some guidance from the general public, which all too frequently, has nothing to say. The result may be that he yields to one of the pressure groups or that he participates in a compromise in which the public interest is ignored.

The Congressman would like to have a clearer expression of the views of the real public. He would also appreciate a pat on the back when he has worked in the public interest. The same applies to your state and local officials and your President.

## TEN POINTS FOR A YEAR-ROUND CITIZEN

FOLLOWING are ten suggestions that may help the year-round citizen improve his effectiveness.

1. If you live outside a large central city, read a local newspaper as well as a large metropolitan daily. The small weekly newspaper often provides revealing news on the activities of your local party officials and elected representatives, on their friends and supporters.

2. Have someone in your organization keep a score-card on the votes and other actions of your representatives, or better yet, persuade your local newspaper to keep such a score card. Learn the rudiments of parliamentary procedure so that you may better interpret apparently innocent maneuvers such as voting to recommit a bill.



3. Attend your town or city council meetings or have your organization assign one or more members to that responsibility. Remember that in most communities only the special interest



groups bother to be represented at budget hearings and other significant council meetings. The good public official always welcomes testimony from a group devoted to the general public interest as well as from sincere individuals.

4. Get acquainted with your neighbors; discuss local problems with them; persuade them to take part in local political activity; if they are new in the community, talk over such problems as good utility services, adequate garbage collection, etc.

5. Try to develop an understanding of propaganda techniques and the maneuverings of political leaders and groups. A program in the public interest is often blocked by the "yes, but—" technique, by honeyed words of lip-service, by crippling amendments offered by avowed supporters of a program, by repeated referral to committees, by the call for further study, and by a few damning emotional slogans that utilize the catch-words of democracy, unity, tradition, and the like. Look out for the committee that is "loaded" in favor or against a specific proposition or candidate. Look out for the big-lie technique used by the smear artist. Learn the difference between an idle statute and a law that is really being enforced.

6. Learn to compromise—not with your principles, of course—but in ways that will facilitate effective action by your organiza-

tion. Group action depends upon compromise. The individual who is completely uncompromising stands in the way of any effective action. The other extreme would welcome a totalitarian



approach in which the rank and file follow a party line slavishly. In between these extremes is a system of self-imposed discipline that doesn't surrender freedom of thought.

Your ability to compromise is related to your ability to deal with people. If you're a newcomer offering your services to a party organization, you may receive anything but a "glad-hand" reception from old-line party workers. Get over this hurdle and you'll find that working with different types of people—politics—can be a lot of fun as well as worthwhile activity.

7. As a member of any non-partisan organization, help your organization to participate in citizenship development and action in keeping with its charter and purposes. In other words, don't try to lead a non-partisan group down the partisan by-ways, but try to keep before the group its civic responsibilities broadly conceived. Do your partisan work outside.

8. Always remember that every public issue is a political issue, that we are all politicians, that we can be good politicians only if we participate actively in partisan and non-partisan organizations. Politics, but not *democracy*, has been for many a bad word. Yet in a democracy more people can take part in politics and the people can have more influence on government than under any other form of government.

9. Remember to register and to vote. But remember also that voting is not enough. Good government requires constant watching and constant activity. It is easier to watch your government at the local level, and your watching at the grass-roots should improve the caliber of the men and women who move on to state and national office.



10. Finally, keep in mind—despite the importance of organization effort—that the individual voter is not a cipher. When he enters the voting booth he does it as an individual citizen. While there he may reexamine his judgments and is capable of doing unexpected things. This puts the individual voter in a position of lasting significance.



## WHAT YOU CAN DO IN '52

LET us say that you have fully determined to assume the responsibilities of citizenship. You are prepared to take off your coat, roll up your sleeves, and dig in. Where do you start? What do you do first?

The answer, of course, will differ with different persons. But there is a job for everybody. In the 1952 presidential campaign, many national organizations are conducting vigorous citizenship campaigns. Since most of these organizations are represented in your community, it should not be difficult for you to select an activity that suits your abilities and interests. The following, for example, will be carrying out active programs in their local branches:

American Association of University Women, 1635 Eye Street, N.W., Washington, D. C.

American Veterans Committee, 1751 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington 9, D. C.

CIO Political Action Committee, 1346 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

National Congress of Parents and Teachers, 600 S. Michigan Blvd., Chicago 5, Illinois

National Council of Churches of Christ in the U. S. A., 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

National Council of Jewish Women, Inc., 1 West 47th Street, New York 19, N. Y.

Young Men's Christian Association, 420 Lexington Avenue, New York, 17, N. Y.

Young Women's Christian Association of the United States of America, 600 Lexington Avenue, New York 22, N. Y.

### A Coordinated Program

As a means of strengthening this general get-out-the-vote campaign, the American Heritage Foundation is serving as a central coordinating agency for the programs of these and other national organizations. Following are some of the specific assignments that organizations had volunteered to carry out at the time this pamphlet went to press:

- American Hotel Association, 221 W. 57th St., New York 19, N. Y. *Will conduct campaign for absentee voters through folders, menu cards, elevator cards, announcements.*
- American Legion, 700 N. Pennsylvania St., Indianapolis, Ind. *Will provide transportation to the polls; conduct block-to-block get-out-the-vote drive.*
- American Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago 11, Ill. *Will provide main libraries and branches with special reading lists on citizenship, will train discussion groups.*
- B'nai B'rith, 1003 K Street, N.W., Washington, 1, D. C. *Will conduct general "register and vote" campaign.*
- Boy Scouts of America, 2 Park Avenue, New York 16, N. Y. *Will conduct house-to-house campaign by uniformed scouts.*
- Citizens Budget Commission, Inc., 51 E. 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y. *Will encourage citizen action through information on community tax problems.*
- Common Council for American Unity, 20 W. 40th St., New York 18, N. Y. *Will work on all aspects of "register and vote" campaign with the foreign-born.*
- General Federation of Women's Clubs, 1734 N Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. *Will establish discussion groups.*
- Kiwanis International, 520 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, 11, Ill. *Will organize community-wide effort in each club's city, and conduct research on candidates' qualifications.*
- League of Women Voters, 1026 17th St., N.W., Washington 6, D. C. *Will conduct all-out registration and vote campaign.*
- National Retail Dry Goods Association, 100 W. 31st Street, New York 1, N. Y. *Will conduct registration and vote campaign through window displays, counter cards, local advertising.*
- Rotary International, 35 E. Wacker Drive, Chicago 1, Illinois. *Will conduct a general informational "register and vote" program through study, forum, and debate groups.*
- Theatre Owners of America, 1501 Broadway, New York 18, N. Y. *Will give general assistance with documentary films, lobby and marquee cards and trailers.*
- United States Junior Chamber of Commerce, 21st and Main Streets, Tulsa, Oklahoma. *Will run house-to-house get-out-the-vote drive, and will conduct centers for baby sitting and transportation to the polls.*

## WHAT TO READ

- Anderson, William and Weidner, Edward W. *State and Local Government in the United States*. New York, Henry Holt & Co. 1951
- Fisher, Marguerite J., and Starratt, Edith E. *Parties and Politics in the Local Community*. Washington, D. C., National Council for the Social Studies. 1945
- Flynn, Edward J. *You're the Boss*. New York, Viking Press. 1947
- Good Citizen. The rights and duties of an American*. American Heritage Foundation, 25 W. 45 St., New York 19, N. Y. 1951
- Gosnell, Harold F. *Grass Roots Politics*. Washington, D. C., American Council on Public Affairs. 1942
- Is Politics Your Job?* Washington, D. C., League of Women Voters. 1951
- Keller, James. *Government Is Your Business*. Garden City, New York, Doubleday & Co. 1951
- Key, V. O., Jr. *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups*. New York, T. Y. Crowell Co. 1947
- *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf. 1949
- Mellet, Lowell. *Handbook of Politics*. New York, Penguin Books. 1946
- National Municipal Review* (a monthly publication). National Municipal League, 299 Broadway, New York 7, New York.
- Political Pilgrim's Progress* (a series of articles in the *Ladies' Home Journal*). Philadelphia, Pa.
- Registration Manual*. C.I.O. Political Action Committee, 1346 Connecticut Ave., Washington 6, D. C. June 1951
- Stone, Kathryn. *Self-Government USA*. New York, Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund, Inc. 1951
- Twelve Steps to More Votes*. Washington, D. C., Legislative Department, Chamber of Commerce of the United States,

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15. Does my state permit absentee voting in primary? .....					
in election? .....					
16. What is the date of the next election? .....					
What local, state, or national offices are to be filled? .....					
.....					

\* Some of these questions can be answered from the table on page 17; most of the rest of the information can be obtained from your municipal or county clerk.





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1. \ \_\_\_\_\_ What are  
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2. How many voters are registered in my district? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who is my precinct leader or party committeeman? \_\_\_\_\_  
My county chairman? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What congressional district do I live in? \_\_\_\_\_ What area  
does it cover? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Who is my Congressman? \_\_\_\_\_ U. S. Senators? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What form of government do I have in my municipality? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. When are the primaries held in my state? \_\_\_\_\_  
Is there a run-off? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Is the primary open or closed? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Does my state have a presidential preference primary? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How can a candidate get his name on the ballot for primary  
elections? \_\_\_\_\_
11. How are delegates chosen for the national party convention?  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Does my state have permanent personal registration? \_\_\_\_\_  
If not, what dates have been set for registration? \_\_\_\_\_
13. What are the voting requirements in my state as to age \_\_\_\_\_;  
residence in state \_\_\_\_\_, in county \_\_\_\_\_,  
in precinct \_\_\_\_\_; literacy \_\_\_\_\_;  
poll tax \_\_\_\_\_?
14. Is absentee registration permitted? \_\_\_\_\_ if so, what is the  
last date? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Does my state permit absentee voting in primary? \_\_\_\_\_  
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16. What is the date of the next election? \_\_\_\_\_  
What local, state, or national offices are to be filled? \_\_\_\_\_  
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